

# Food and Nutrition Services: Hurricane Matthew

## Q&A

### GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. **Can ABAWDS come back in and apply for regular benefits?** *(Posted on 10/12/2016)*  
ABAWD policy still applies to regular benefits.
2. **If the local agency has tried to communicate with the county emergency manager and has not received the help needed, what are our next steps?** *(Posted on 10/12/2016)*  
Contact your Area Coordinator for Recovery
3. **Since it may be days or weeks before a disaster FNS program is in place, can you do a press release giving an update?** *(Posted on 10/12/2016)* *(Posted on 10/14/2016)*  
The Department is currently working on a press release. Once completed, counties will receive notification via Listserv and through the Director's Association, which will contain a copy of the press release for distribution/posting. *(Updated on 10/14/2016)*  
A press release was sent out on 10/17/2016 and can be viewed at <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/press-releases> *(Updated on 10/18/2016)*
4. **Is NC FAST available on Sundays before noon?** *(Posted on 10/13/2016)*  
Typically NC FAST is not available until noon on Sundays, currently we are working to try to have it available earlier than noon.
5. **Can NC FAST have extended keying hours?** *(Posted on 10/14/2016)*  
Yes. NC Fast will be available from 5:00 A.M. until 8:00 P.M., except on Sundays, until Disaster FNS begins.
6. **If a recipient goes to another county with a recertification, can the 2<sup>nd</sup> county process that recertification for the other county? Or do they need to tell the recipient to take their recertification to the county they live in?** *(Posted on 10/13/2016)*  
The 2<sup>nd</sup> county can process the recertification for the original county, however the 2<sup>nd</sup> county should not take ownership in NC FAST.
7. **Where should policy questions be sent?** *(Posted on 10/13/2016)*  
Send your questions to OST at [ost.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:ost.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov) . The normal response time is two (2) days unless the response requires further research. Be sure to add the word "Disaster" to the subject line of your email. *(Updated on 10/18/2016)*
8. **Can workers in non-affected counties help workers in the affected counties?** *(Posted on 10/13/2016)*  
Yes, this effort is being coordinated with the Director's Association.

- 9. Will the NC FAST sandbox be available to test the disaster program? (Posted on 10/13/2016)**

No, but there will be a webinar presented to counties.

- 10. Will the deadlines for submitting administrative data related to the 1571 and Subsidized Child Care be extended for impacted counties? (Posted on 10/14/2016)**

Yes. The DHHS Controllors Office has extended the deadline for impacted counties to submit the 1571 Report to Tuesday, October 18, 2016. A county that determines they are unable to meet the 10/18/2016 deadline should contact their Local Business Liaison (LBL) for assistance. They may also contact the Controllors Office at 919-527-6150.

The deadline for submitting information for Subsidized Child Care has also been extended to Tuesday, October 18, 2016 for impacted counties. A county that determines they are unable to meet the 10/18/2016 deadline should contact their Local Business Liaison (LBL) for assistance.

- 11. What number should county agencies provide to clients who have questions? (Posted on 10/14/2016)**

Refer them to the EBT Call Center at 1- 866-719-0141.

- 12. Because so many clients have been displaced and cannot be reached by phone or mail, can we waive the phone interview requirement? (Posted on 10/17/2016)**

No

- 13. Has the NC Retail Merchants Association been notified of the Hot Food Waiver and are they ready to start allowing hot food to be purchased? (Posted on 10/17/2016)**

Yes, the NC Retail Merchants Association was notified and they have notified the vendors. All stores that have hot food should have been ready this past Saturday. (10/15)

- 14. Do we still send our questions to OST? (Posted on 10/17/2016)**

Yes. Any questions that are in reference to Disaster benefits or replacement benefits send to OST and put DISASTER in the subject line.

- 15. Will there be an extension for MAGI recertifications? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

The 23 counties that have an IA designation should notify Carolyn McClanahan no later than 10/18/2016 to request an extension. Send the email to: [carolyn.mcclanahan@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:carolyn.mcclanahan@dhhs.nc.gov).

- 16. How should changes reported to a second county by a client from an impacted county be relayed to the client's home county? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

If the client has the ability to return to their home county to report the change, request the client do so. If not, take the appropriate case action related to the reported change as a courtesy to the client and the impacted county.

- 17. Which County DSS agencies are still closed? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

As of 10/18/2016, Robeson County is the only agency that is not open. Robeson anticipates the agency opening on Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup>.

**18. Have any additional counties received IA designation? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

Yes. They are Martin, Craven, Tyrell and Washington. This bring the total to 27 IA counties.

The Governor's Office has requested that 66 counties be designated as IA counties. As additional counties are designated IA, NC DSS will notify USDA of the need to amend any requested waivers.

Onslow County received designation as an IA county. (Updated on 10/20/2016)

**19. What, if any information is needed from IA counties for the USDA waiver request? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

Counties are asked to provide data from their local emergency management agency to NC DSS related to power outage and flood impact for their respective county. This information will supplement what was requested from the utility providers and will facilitate the waiver submission to USDA.

The information regarding the specific data elements needed from counties will be sent in a ListServ message and also via the Directors Association. The communications will also include the contact information for submitting the information to NC DSS.

**20. Will the same information from Question 20 be required of counties who have the potential of being designated as an IA county? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

Yes, a ListServ message will be sent providing the names of the counties who are currently designated as IA and the potential additional counties.

**21. If the agency was closed or unable to access mail can recertifications received on 10/17/2016 be considered timely? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

Yes, they can be date stamped for 10/15/2016 and considered timely.

**22. What guidance can be given regarding political candidates who want to volunteer and/or campaign at county dss agencies? (Posted on 10/19/2016)**

Only merit based employees can process replacements or Disaster FNS. All volunteers are subject to the same confidentiality requirements as agency employees; they must sign a confidentiality statement. It is best to consult with the agency's County Attorney or review your agency's Ethics Rules on this matter.

**23. Is there a cutoff period for when counties can be declared an IA county? (Posted on 10/20/2016)**

No, the designation is based on data related to the impact in the county.

**24. When and how will non-impacted counties, who offered assistance to impacted counties, receive notification that their support is needed? *(Posted on 10/20/2016)***

Through the Director's Association.

**25. Will there be a conference call on Friday, October 21<sup>st</sup>. *(Posted on 10/20/2106)***

Yes, the call will focus primarily on the D-FNS program; policy, procedures, logistics, etc. There will be an Administrative Letter issued later today which will include the information for discussion during the Friday call.

## **REPLACEMENT BENEFITS**

**1. Can FNS recipients request Replacement FNS benefits in a county other than the county they live and receive FNS? *(Posted on 10/12/2016)***

Yes, current FNS recipients can apply for replacement benefits in any county. The county taking the request for replacement benefits must not take ownership of that case in NCFAS.

**2. What is the date of the "incident" for replacement benefits? *(Posted on 10/12/2016)***

In regard to replacement benefits, the date of the incident is the date the recipient states they lost their food.

**3. New USDA Interpretation: Can a recipient that has already received their October FNS benefits request a replacement? *(Posted on 10/12/2016)***

Yes. Ask the client the date food was lost and the dollar amount lost. Replace the benefit amount the household states was lost, not to exceed household's monthly allotment. (It is not a requirement to check ebtEDGE.)

**4. New USDA Interpretation: If a client has not received October FNS benefits are they still eligible for a replacement? *(Posted on 10/12/2016)***

Yes. Ask client the date food was lost and dollar amount lost. Process a replacement for September benefits based on client's statement of food amount lost, not to exceed the household's monthly allotment. (It is not a requirement to check ebtEDGE)

**5. If a September replacement benefit was issued for Tropical Storm Hermine, can the household request another replacement for Hurricane Matthew for the same month? *(Posted on 10/12/2016)***

Yes.

**Will NC FAST allow a second replacement for the same month? *(Posted on 10/12/2016)***

Yes.

**6. Are replacement benefits only for the counties approved for the Individual Assistance Declaration by the President? *(Posted on 10/12/2016)***

No, the individual manual replacement benefits are for any recipient in any county.

**7. If a client request a replacement of benefits can the affidavit be mailed to the client and does the date of the call protect the 10 days? *(Posted on 10/12/2016)***

Yes, an affidavit (DSS-1678) can be mailed to the client as long as the request is made within ten calendars days of the incident (the loss of food).

Do not issue a replacement if the agency does not receive the signed affidavit (DSS-1678) within ten calendar days from the date the replacement request was made. (FNS Manual Sect.910) The affidavit does not need to be notarized.

**8. If a case terminated the end of September (they are not active in October) can they receive replacement benefits for September? *(Posted on 10/12/2016)***

Yes, they can as long as they state they had a food loss from the benefits they received in Sept. This is true for any recipient, including ABAWD that have used their three months.

**9. If a September FNS application was denied can that individual receive replacement benefits? *(Posted on 10/13/2016)***

No, if the application was denied, then no benefits were issued, so there are no benefits to replace. That person can make a new application at any time per policy.

**10. Do clients need to provide a list of lost food? *(Posted on 10/13/2016)***

No. Lists for lost food are NOT to be requested.

**11. Can non-merit employees process replacement benefits or Disaster FNS? *(Posted on 10/13/2016)***

No. Only merit based employees can process replacements or Disaster FNS.

**12. How do we issue replacement benefits for cases with claims established? *(Posted on 10/13/2016)***

Issue the amount of food the client states they loss, not to exceed the amount of benefits the client actually received.

**13. How do we process replacement benefits for (elderly) SNAP recipients? *(Posted on 10/13/2016)***

SNAP replacement benefits should be processed the same way that Simplified Reporting benefits are replaced.

**14. If recipient is denied replacement benefits, do they get notification? *(Posted on 10/13/2016)***

A replacement, unlike an application, does not require a denial notice. If a replacement is started and it is determined the client should not receive the replacement, such as the client has already received a replacement for the same disaster, the worker would document the case and delete the replacement evidence.

**15. How are September replacement benefits issued for cases that are currently closed? *(Posted on 10/14/2016)***

Workers should reactivate the closed case, making sure the case is in active status. Follow the steps in the Job Aid: *Issuing Replacement Benefits*. Use the reason of "Food destroyed in a disaster". The evidence must be applied and approved by the Supervisor on the same day.  
*(Updated on 10/17/2016)*

If this process does not work please call NC FAST Help Desk and choose option #1 for Disaster questions. (Updated on 10/18/2016)

**16. Will the replacement period extend beyond 10 days? (Posted on 10/14/2016)**

A waiver is in development to submit to USDA requesting an extension of the 10 day replacement timeframe for counties that have an Individual Assistance Declaration. If approved by USDA, the waiver is only applicable for IA counties, not statewide.

**17. How should counties that were not part of the disaster area verify power outages for benefit replacement requests? (Posted on 10/14/2016)**

The utility companies asked that such requests not be submitted as they do not have the capacity to provide timely responses due to other disaster related priorities. The county's local Emergency Management Team is the best point of contact for such information.

**18. What are the reasons why a replacement request would not process? (Posted on 10/14/2016)**

Check case for accurate and complete information and ensure the Supervisor approves on the same day.

**19. Can clients that receive replacement benefits for September also receive D-FNS in October? (Posted on 10/17/2016)**

No, active recipients cannot receive regular benefits and D-FNS in the same month.

**20. Does the replacement affidavit require client's signature? (Posted on 10/17/2016)**

Yes

**21. Will the state allow other staff to approve replacement benefits other than Supervisors and Lead Workers? (Posted on 10/17/2016)**

No

**22. Can we mail the replacement affidavit to clients that cannot come in the office, and process it when it is returned? (Posted on 10/17/2016)**

Yes. The affidavit can be mailed to the client. It must be returned within ten calendar days from the date the report is filed. Refer to FNS Manual section 910.

**23. How will the mass replacement benefits be issued? (Posted on 10/17/2016)**

If we are approved for mass replacement benefits they will be issued through NC FAST as a batch.

**24. Will there be any changes to the current 10 day replacement period since additional counties are being added to the list of IA counties? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

As new counties are included on the IA county list they will be added to the 10 day extension waiver. Remember the 10 days starts from the date the household reports they lost food, which may or may not be on 10/8/2016. (See question #2 above) If there are questions, please contact OST.

- 25. What happens if a client comes in to apply for replacement benefits before the county receives IA designation and is turned away because it is beyond the 10 days of their food loss, then the next day county receives the IA designation? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

Counties can have the client complete the affidavit, explaining that it can only be processed if or when the county is approved for the Extension Waiver.

If no extension is granted then replacement benefits will not be issued. Remember the 10 days starts from the date the individual states they lost their food. (Updated on 10/19/2016)

- 26. What is the process when a client states they were unable to retrieve their EBT card during evacuation and need a replacement? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

The EBT Call Center can order a replacement EBT card if the EBT account has already been established. The client must be able to verify the SSN, DOB and the mailing address on the EBT Account.

- 27. Can clients request replacement FNS benefits through the EBT Call Center? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

Yes. Clients can contact the EBT Call center to request an affidavit to report food loss. This information will be shared with NC DSS and affidavits with the original date of request will be mailed to the client. The client must sign and return the mailed affidavit as outlined in FNS policy. NC DSS will provide counties with the information of those clients who were mailed affidavits.

- 28. Can NC DSS send affidavits to non-impacted counties to key? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

Yes, this will be coordinated through the Director's Association.

- 29. Can a household, such as an ABAWD, that is reassessed and determined ineligible for September benefits be issued replacement benefits for September. (Posted on 10/19/2016)**

No, if an assessment is done on a case and it is determined to be ineligible for September FNS benefits, the household would not be eligible for replacement benefits.

## **AUTOMATIC (MASS) FNS REPLACEMENT BENEFITS**

- 1. Should counties continue processing recertifications? (Posted on 10/12/2016)**

Yes, it is very important that recertifications are processed in the event an Automatic (Mass) FNS replacement occurs, these cases will be included in the batch. Any recertification keyed after the Automatic (Mass) FNS replacement batch will require the replacement to be manually keyed by the county.

- 2. What do we do with affidavits received, but not keyed if we do Mass Replacement? (Posted on 10/13/2016)**

Per FNS Manual Section 910.01C replace benefits within ten calendar days of the report or within two days of receiving the DSS-1678 whichever is later. Per 910.04 if a disaster allotment

(mass replacement) is issued prior to issuing the manual replacement, deny the manual replacement allotment. You will need to document in NC FAST.

**3. When will the Automatic Mass replacement occur? (Posted on 10/21/2016)**

At this time, USDA has not approved Automatic (Mass) Replacement Benefits. Once approved, an Administrative Letter will be issued with instructions.

## **DISASTER FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES (D-FNS)**

**1. Will Disaster FNS run for 5 days? (Posted on 10/13/2016)**

Currently there is no Disaster FNS program in place. This will be addressed if the Disaster FNS waiver is approved.

**2. Will people be able to apply for Disaster FNS through ePass? (Posted on 10/17/2016)**

No

**3. What will be NC FAST hours be during the D-FNS application period be if we are approved? (Posted on 10/17/2016)**

Monday – Saturday	5:00AM to 7:00PM
Sunday	8:00AM to 7:00PM

**4. Can one county key D-FNS applications for another county? (Posted on 10/17/2016)**

Yes, the process for doing this is being updated and will be provided in FAST Help. It will also be shared through NC FAST email communications.

**5. Will the IA designated counties begin taking D-FNS applications on Friday, October 21<sup>st</sup>? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

Which counties and when the D-FNS program begins will depend on approval from USDA.

**6. Is there a way to distinguish between the regular EBT card and the D-FNS EBT card? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

Yes, the D-FNS card does not have the client's name on the card. It has a label that states it is a disaster benefit.

**7. Does the County need to request the number of D-FNS EBT cards they will need from NC DSS before the application process? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

No. NC DSS will look at the current county caseload count and using a ratio of 1.25%, will project the number of cards needed. The county will receive that estimated number of cards. If additional cards are needed, the county should contact NC DSS.

**8. What information should the IA counties provide to NC DSS related to the site(s) being utilized for D-FNS applications? (Posted on 10/18/2016)**

All IA counties must provide the following information to David Locklear at [david.locklear@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:david.locklear@dhhs.nc.gov) no later than Noon on 10/18/2016.



- Location Name (s)
- Physical Address of Location (s)
- Primary and Secondary Contact to receive and sign for the D-FNS EBT delivery

**9. How will counties receive the D-FNS EBT cards? *(Posted on 10/18/2016)***

The Division will coordinate with State staff for the delivery of the D-FNS EBT cards. The cards will be delivered directly to the counties, and require receipt and signature by the county designated contact. To ensure the security of the EBT cards, only open boxes as needed. Do not open all of the boxes at once; any unopened boxes must be returned to NC DSS.

**10. Will the PIN numbers be assigned to the D-FNS EBT cards? *(Posted on 10/18/2016)***

The last 4 digits on the D-FNS EBT card is the PIN number. It is suggested that the client change the PIN number. The D-FNS benefits will load on the EBT card once the case is approved and processed in the overnight batch. In most instances, the benefits will be available the next day.

**11. Can counties use leftover EBT cards from previous disaster events? *(Posted on 10/18/2016)***

**No.** Any D-FNS EBT cards from previous disaster programs must be destroyed. Destroy these cards at this time and prior to the receipt of cards for the current event. Counties will be provided instructions on how to destroy cards from prior events.

**12. What resources will be available to assist counties during the D-FNS application process? *(Posted on 10/18/2016) (Posted on 10/20/2016)***

A command center supported by State staff will be housed at NC FAST to assist with policy, procedural and NC FAST functionality questions during the D-FNS application period. Also State staff will be on site in each participating county during the D-FNS application period.

NC FAST will provide, upon request, laptops to counties that may have lost equipment due to flooding, etc. and for those who wish to provide mobile access. Counties should assess their need and contact their OST representative for assistance in requesting laptops.

In terms of other resources needed to support the D-FNS process, counties should refer to documents provided during the webinar. They not only address staff readiness/coordination but also client needs. This includes ADA compliance, language/interpreters, physical space, water and other needs. In terms of public restrooms, counties may coordinate with their local emergency management team to request port-a-johns through WEB EOC.

**State staff providing assistance via the Command Center, will be available 8:00 am- 7:00 pm during the D-FNS period.**

**13. Can residents of an IA county apply for D-FNS in non-IA County? *(Posted on 10/19/2016)***

No, only D-FNS counties take applications because they are the only counties that will have EBT cards available to issue to applicants. Other counties that wish to help can contact the Director Association for more instruction.

**14. When will counties be able to view the NC FAST D-FNS training?** *(Posted on 10/19/2016) (Posted on 10/21/2016)*

NC FAST will record the training on 10/19/2016. Once the recording is completed, county staff may access the training thorough FAST HELP and the Learning Gateway.

The NC FAST training is being updated to include additional information/clarifications. It should be available on the Learning Gateway by 2:00 pm on 10/21/2106.

**15. Will there be any changes to the income and resources limits for D-FNS?** *(Posted on 10/20/2016)*

Information regarding eligibility and other policy will be addressed in the forthcoming Administrative Letter and during the Friday, Oct. 21 conference call.

**16. Should counties use the current DSS-1432, Application for Disaster Food and Nutrition Services posted online?** *(Posted on 10/20/2016)*

No. The application and any other applicable documents will be revised based on requirements and procedures as outlined by USDA, once the approval waiver is received.

**17. Will the conference calls continue once counties begin D-FNS?** *(Posted 10/20/2106)*

Yes, but the time and access information will change. Information will be sent via LISTSERV later in the week providing more information.

**18. Will all twenty-eight IA counties begin their D-FNS program at the same time?** *(Posted on 10/20/2016)*

The current waiver being submitted to USDA includes eighteen IA counties. County Directors received a listing of these counties from the Directors Association. As NC DSS receives additional county data, as required by USDA, there may be the need to submit an additional waiver to USDA.

**19. Should special procedures be followed for handling/storing Disaster EBT cards?** *(Posted on 10/21/2016)*

Only open the EBT card liners as needed. There should be two staff present at all times when there is any activity involving the EBT cards. EBT cards not in use must be stored in a locked secure area.

**20. Should there be a higher case sensitivity level for County DSS staff who apply for D-FNS benefits?** *(Posted on 10/21/2016)*

Yes, NC FAST allows the sensitivity level of the case information to be increased to Level 2. This will limit the ability of other staff to view the application and related information. Additional information will be provided in the forthcoming Administrative Letter.

**21. Do you have to provide other FNS program services during the D-FNS application period?** *(Posted on 10/21/2016)*

Counties need to designate a separate area for the disaster clients as counties must continue to operate their regular FNS program during normal business hours.

**22. Will there be a manifest for clients to sign when they are given their Disaster EBT Card?**  
*(Posted on 10/21/2016)*

Yes, it will arrive with the cards and clients do need to sign it when assigned a card.

### **Counties Approved for an Individual Assistance Declaration**

<b>10/11/2016</b>	<b>Beaufort, Bladen, Columbus, Cumberland, Edgecombe, Hoke, Lenoir, Nash, Pitt and Robeson,</b>
<b>10/12/2016</b>	<b>Bertie, Johnston, Wayne, and Wilson</b>
<b>10/13/2016</b>	<b>Greene, Harnett and Sampson</b>
<b>10/13/2016</b>	<b>Jones and Gates</b>
<b>10/14/2016</b>	<b>Duplin, Pender, Dare and Hyde</b>
<b>10/18/2016</b>	<b>Craven, Martin, Tyrell and Washington</b>
<b>10/20/2016</b>	<b>Onslow</b>